

WOMAN'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

—OF—

HOME MISSIONS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
53 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N. Y.

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A Greeting from Sitka to the California Endeavorers:



DR. B. K. WILBUR

The following letter from Dr. B. K. Wilbur, Physician and Surgeon to the Sitka Mission Hospital, has been sent by request to the Young People's Societies of Christian Endeavor in California. Each society pledging any sum annually to the support of the Hospital, will receive three letters per year from Dr. Wilbur, telling of the Hospital work and that of the Mission station.

To the Young People's Societies of Christian Endeavor of California.

DEAR FRIENDS AND CO-LABORERS:—It was with much pleasure that I received the information that you have undertaken to aid in the support of the work at Sitka Mission Hospital. May it bring to you great comfort and joy in realizing that you are contributing to one of the greatest evangelizing agencies in all Alaska. Could you see the happiness and peace so continually witnessed on the faces of the sufferers in the wards there, your hearts would be made glad

and you could not but feel that any sacrifice you may make is more than repaid by this mission of love.

Let me introduce you to *your very own* hospital. Imagine yourself walking up Sitka's main street around the Greek church, then looking to the right, through a gap between a curio store and the old saw-mill over the Bay, a mile away on the crescent-shaped shore you see the long line of mission buildings. First is the Boys' Home, then the Girls' Home, Church, Industrial Homes, Museum, Manse, and the Hospital, the last of the line near the model cottages; not a building remarkable for beauty, but plain and simple in outline, compact and well arranged. A few years ago the medical plant at Sitka was conducted somewhat on the cottage plan, there being a separate building for boys and girls. This was found too expensive, however, and now all is condensed in one house.

Entering the door which you see in the front of the hospital, in the accompanying cut, you are in the doctor's office, where the natives from the village are received from one to two each day. It is not furnished in black walnut, nor upholstered in leather, but the book shelves, table and medicine racks are painted simply in the same tint of the walls. To the left a door opens to the dispensary, which reminds one of a country drug store, with its shelves of drugs and bottles, its closets and tables. Thanks to our good nurse, it is always in order. A door opposite to the one by which we enter the office is marked Ward 1, and leads to the boys' or male ward, where are nine beds of the usual type. A group of convalescing patients sit about the stove, some occupied in reading, others playing games, and a few carving. Passing through this ward, which occupies the whole width of the building, we enter a bright room, the dining-room, and to the left the kitchen, which is in the L addition, and does not show in the cut.

On the second floor, over the dining-room, is the home of your friend, Miss Esther Gibson, the nurse. Her task is not an easy one, for when we remember that hospital nurses in the East seldom have over six beds to attend to, and eight or twelve hours a day, without any care of the food save to give it to the patients as it is sent from the kitchen, and without bother about instruments and supplies, we can understand that with twenty beds, night and day oversight of the kitchen and of the whole house, our nurse has her hands more than full. Yet she thinks her position not a hard one, and is one of our most consecrated and untiring workers. Three native girls assist her in the work.

Across the hall from Miss Gibson's room is a private room for emergency and private cases, and in front of both, over Ward 1, is Ward 2 for girls and women. It is a bright, cheery room, whose walls are decorated with pictures sent from California last Christmas. Here we find our convalescents rolling bandages, cutting gauze, sewing or doing some native fancy work. Dearly would I love to introduce you to the patients, and tell you the history of each; perhaps I can some time, if not now, for I hope many of you will come to see us. There is an operating room with its white walls and tables, shelves of cotton, gauzes and bandages, glittering rows of instruments and other paraphernalia of surgical work.

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The storeroom for bedding, etc., and the bathroom in the L are near by, while the storehouse for food supplies is just back of the kitchen. Thus you see you have quite a complete institution to provide for; and although medical work is expensive, it pays in premiums of immortal souls and lives made happier and brighter, often through that deeper joy in the love of Christ. For your encouragement let me say that our constant endeavor is to reduce expenses to the minimum. All our bandages, gauzes, etc., are prepared in the hospital, reducing our expenses not a little, as we buy the raw material in bulk. All supplies are ordered by myself, and with the approval of the superintendent of the Mission, Prof. U. P. Shull, both in every way striving to prevent waste and avoid needless expense. You will be glad to know that *your* hospital is not only for the school children, but has a far wider field of usefulness, as natives may be received from any part of Alaska. Those who are able are to pay a moderate amount for the services they receive, this money, of course, to be applied toward the support of the hospital.

Before closing let me raise the curtain for a moment and show you an example of the real work you are undertaking, in the Story of Billy. That misfortunes rarely come singly, was never more truly illus-



SITKA HOSPITAL.

trated than in the case of this Klinget man; shot in the thigh some years ago, he was rendered a cripple, but able to support himself by making carvings and selling them to the summer tourists. He fell through a rotten floor and rebroke his injured leg. As the Greeko-Russian Church had no better help for this than holy water and burning incense, which are not recognized modern methods of surgical treatment, the man called for me, although previously rather unfriendly. The hurt was an ugly one, and I scarcely hoped for a favorable result but feared an amputation. The hospital was not open so it was necessary to treat him in his native home in the Ranch (native village). While still on the floor, unable to help himself, his wife went off to a feast at Chilcat; his step-daughter gave but poor attention; his younger brother died, and was buried without Billy's being able to see him, and his elder brother was unkind and neglected him. When his wife returned she ran away and married another man, while his step-daughter stole everything he possessed, except the clothes he had on and his few tools. The hospital having been opened I moved the patient to it, operated on the hip and secured a good result, but before he could return to his home, his sister died. Surely his cup was full, but he found a new and abiding joy, for he saw the hollowness of the Russian faith, and renouncing the old he accepted the true faith and found peace through Christ Jesus, our Saviour. He has since joined our church and resumed his carving; is living a consistent life, saved by the power of God through the instrumentality of the hospital.

Another instance is of a woman who was brought into our operating room to prepare for an operation. Before lying down on the table, she knelt and began to pray in her native tongue. It was a touching exhibition of childlike faith, and as the naval surgeon, who was to assist me, Miss Gibson and I knelt with her, do you not think my faith was quickened and my courage made stronger? I realized that I was but an instrument in the hands of the Great Physician, in whose hands alone are the issues of life.

I thank you for the interest you have shown in undertaking this work. May some of the joy we have at Sitka drift down the Pacific until it reaches every C. E. Society of California. May every breeze bring hope and gladness to every society, yes to each Endeavorer who aids in this twice blessed work, and may the peace of God abide with you.

Faithfully your fellow Endeavorer,

B. K. WILBUR, M. D.

SITKA MISSION HOSPITAL, May 1, 1895.